
BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING MINUTES 12/23/08

The Board of Selectmen met in the Town Hall, Joseph F. Bilotta Meeting Room as scheduled with Thomas Alonzo, Paula Bertram, Steven M. deBettencourt, Thomas Mason, Dave Matthews and CAFO Kerry Speidel present. Meeting opened at 7:01 P.M. with the Pledge of Allegiance

PUBLIC DISCUSSION

Chair recognized severity of the 12/11/08 storm and the response our town had. Acknowledged for performance above and beyond Fire Chief Scott Glenny who also serves as Emergency Management Director. The Emergency Operations Center (EOC) team worked very closely, with Chief of Police Dan Bourgeois, Department of Public Works Director Jack Rodriquez and CAFO Kerry Speidel, all the officers and fire department personnel, Department of Public Works workers, staff at the emergency shelter, which was headed up by Sue Glenny and assisted with Reverend Andy Burr. The shelter was staffed by mostly volunteers, recognized Sue Deming for her assistance, John Londa, Gerry Sampson and janitorial staff, to the CAFO's office and the employees of Town Hall. Doreen Noble, Council on Aging Director, State Legislatures elect, including Representative elect Jennifer Benson and Senator elect Jennifer Flanagan. All the shelter volunteers and their efforts to keep a positive attitude, the Lunenburg Family Lions Club, the restaurants and grocery stores, the National Guard, State Police, all the line tree crews and service crews who came from all over the country to assist in our mutual aid necessity and any other person. Apologize if any are missed and to all the residents of Lunenburg who have endured this event in assisting their neighbors and all their assistance in the Town's time of need. To ask those still without power for their patience as we are told that power will be restored by tomorrow afternoon.

As of tonight's conference call with Governor's office, crews are still working on one primary circuit, the Hollis Hills stretch would make 100% of the primary's running, then they will be working on the secondary services. For those re-entering their homes noted the following from the Chief's: WHEN POWER HAS RESUMED AT YOUR PROPERTY BE SURE TO REPLACE THE BATTERIES IN YOUR SMOKE AND CARBON MONOXIDE DETECTORS. BE CAUTIOUS OF HOT WATER HEATERS AND WATER PIPES AS THEY MAY BURST. TAKE CAUTION ON HIRING PRIVATE CONTRACTORS TO DO WORK ON YOUR PROPERTY AS IT HAS BEEN REPORTED THAT THEY HAVE TAKEN CASH FOR SERVICES AND HAVE NOT RETURNED. REPORT ANY SUCH ACTIVITY TO THE POLICE DEPARTMENT.

Call breakdown for E.O.C from 12/11 handled 191 calls averaging 116 calls per day. Shelter has officially closed as of this afternoon, there were 1588 visits made to the shelter, overnight 303 visits and served over 2500 meals, completely manned by volunteers.

The Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance informed the town that those people who have received food stamps and their food was lost due to spoilage should contact the department in order to cover their losses. Our primary focus remains on restoring power to all the residents. After this incident we intend to use all our resources to investigate Unifil and our options, their response was wholly inadequate at every level, from day one communication has been severely lacking, not only to this town and its residents but the other towns. Their whole operation lacked manpower and they failed to provide direction to the people who were coming in to assist, as they didn't have a plan to put to good use. Will say our investigation into alternatives will not be a short one, but with the help of the state and our representatives, this will not happen again.

Dave Rodgers representing Lunenburg Lions Club, asked for consideration and help from the town on the established food bank, the supply has been depleted, need food and funds to purchase items such as CO and smoke detectors would ask for donations be dropped off at the public safety building. Checks and gift cards would be greatly appreciated.

State Representative Jennifer Benson reiterated the Chairman's statement that the state is behind all of us. There is one entity responsible for this and we're going to ensure that we're not forgotten. This is unacceptable, to work at this level with the leadership in town has been very rewarding including the Board of Selectmen and should be proud of how they handled the situation. Accepts all phone calls, we will be conducting hearings, and they should be held out here so that you don't have to trek into Boston.

Questions regarding FEMA and this situation are ongoing and being investigated by the Governor and funds have been requested as we have surpassed the amount of money that qualifies us for a designated disaster region, as soon as information is available we'll get it to you.

Directed residents to file a complaint with the Department of Public Utilities; Jen has placed a link on her website to get right to the form.

Chair requested that the residents that are still without power be allowed to speak first.

Lynn Mortis, 870 Mass Ave., without power since the storm, single mom and operates business out of her home. Service was put on the house but wires were cut and told that they were servicing other areas first. This information will be forwarded to the Public Safety where an employee with Unifil has been imbedded and we're adding to the list.

Tom Mason recommended that those in attendance keep a personal record of these events so that when hearings are held, they will be documented.

Arbor Street resident described the frustration of the residents of the street. Steps should have been taken by the state in day three and not have waited until day 10. Should have had access to the crews for out of state and not have had to wait on Unitil. Made numerous calls to the Public Safety Facility and had been told that investigations will be conducted.

Richard Pike, 92 Prospect Street expressed appreciation to all those previously mentioned and to the board for their efforts. Questioned whether we, as a town have a disaster recovery plan. Spoke to the police department and the fire department for a status on where we are and when will help come and they couldn't answer. Believe we as a town are not putting the necessary infrastructure in place to succeed. Encouraged the town get as many people involved to write a plan, if we are to do better, the issues need to be understood and people need to know before an event occurs.

CAFO informed the public that we do have an emergency management plan, which is general in nature. We did learn a lot about the shortcomings of the structure. We had many without power and many without phones in their homes and even though we used the reverse 911 system, we were only able to reach about 1500 homes and did not have internet service.. We did learn but unfortunately, we weren't able to get communication out quickly enough to the people because we used current means of communication. Town will sit down and review and revise the plan based upon what was learned during this situation.

Brian Gaffney, resident of Beachview Road, advised people to check with their homeowners insurance they should cover \$500. Read from a letter that he sent to Unitil in 1996 and nothing has changed with them, they tell you nothing but lies. Even the call center was not able to give a timeframe of when power would be restored.

Pam Hinsley, 94 Gilcrest Street told that problem was the trees overhanging the lines had never been cut back and Unitil has not maintained their system, want to fire them and this is something the town needs to look into.

Rachel Smith, received power last night, been through three generators, can't cook and has no water as they have a well. Questioned why we can't just fire Unitil as a town. Overheard a conversation with an employee of Unitil who stated that they have only six trucks and at any time, three of them are in the garage.

Ed Howard 340 West Street, problem is that we didn't know where to get generators, the Princeton facility offered to sell the generators at their price, wholesale. As many of you know, we had people in town selling generators off the truck, taking advantage of people and the situation. Don't know what Unitil did for any of us, don't know that they did anything to provide generators. This happened in 1998 and lost power for an extended period of time and nothing has changed since then. Reluctant to file a claim with insurance company as at one time I was put on a "fair" plan and because of this, I had to pay higher rates. This shouldn't be a concern and the legislature should pass a law that putting in claims in times of emergency should not be charged against the homeowner. Troubled by the non-response of Unitil and would commend National Grid as since they've taken over have seen so many trucks in town, has been day and night.

Leonard Vilantray, 4 Lincoln Street continually asked for updates from Unitil and questioned whether a grid or map was available as to who was connected, not until yesterday morning when he came to town hall was the electric company aware that there were five residents on Lincoln Street in Lunenburg that were supplied by Unitil.

Chair informed the public that in an emergency plan there are things that are under direct control of the town. When it comes to a public utility, critical streets are on circuits and Unitil does not share this with the town, we don't even know where the circuits run that feed the town. They (Unitil) have no obligation to share this with us, we pleaded with Unitil (with every pertinent state department on the line, conference calls) were begging for them to give them real time data and were denied specific information. We do not have the authority to go in and tell them they had to provide them to us. They got to the point where the update was. "e have no update at this time" Couldn't believe the level of frustration that we were facing in trying to assist our citizens. The most critical part is the restoration of power and for those companies to provide the information, we didn't even have a representative on sight until this past Wednesday. We need to find out what our options are so we don't have this happen again.

Staus Szlosek, 165 West Street radio station was good source and would recommend this occur quicker, still have lot of damage in town, there are still guy wires down and poles hanging. Need to stay on them so that this gets cleaned up.

Chair will be sure that this point is brought up and question them about their long-term plan.

Paul Royka 147 Hemlock Drive, expressed appreciation to all and can't believe we don't have a microphone for the speakers, goal is to help. This has been too much, don't want to be the kind of guy to call the police department and bug them, just want to save my house. He was told that a Unitil rep would be there (Public Safety) at 7:00, had to buy chains as generators were being stolen. At 7:10, a person comes walking in with a smile and was informed that maybe today, maybe tomorrow. She told me that she didn't even own a computer that was unacceptable> He spoke with the Chief, from a crisis management point to think that we have a plan is insane. To see a yard waste sign in the center of town is insane; we're in shell shock and fear that we're going to lose power again. Don't think we have a plan, the last update was 2007 and we're looking for suggestions, it's insane. Would expect the shelter is the minimal thing that a town of 10,000 should do. Most people want to know how to pay their mortgages and you know this community will bandtogether, how to get a list of people who can provide wood and generators to the community.

Pete Lincoln Hemlock Drive, didn't appear to be a disaster at first. Power goes out in Hickory Hills frequently and after a day, assumed power would go on in a while, read news accounts that power was being restored. How would we know that we would not be serviced, had no way of knowing and if somehow we could have known, then we could have dealt with it much better. If someone could have come down like Paul Revere, we could have done much better. We live an electronic age and when power goes down, we are screwed. We listen to rumors and that's the worst part. Some one should have come down every street to let us know that we were in trouble here.

Melanie Letarte 283 Whalom Road, many of the other were waiting and questioned why this meeting has not been televised. Community has banded together, have now formed relationships with people that would not have occurred. We know that the state is telling us to bring it on. Spoke with the Attorney General's office and was informed that there were only nine complaints on file. Need to do something publicly to bring down Unitil.

Gerry Sampson, 42 Main Street expressed appreciation for all that you have done. Appreciate the shelter and the people felt at home, the last one left today and we got hugs, they knew you were there and want to thank you.

Fred Jewell Cove Road, questioned how do we get rid of Unitil and get a reputable power company to serve our neighborhood.

Chair we will know how that happens and if we need legislation from the state we will get their help. It will not be simple, the Department of Public Utilities will be conducting their own investigation. As far as our emergency action plan, we will be assembling our people and we will be remedying the problems that we've identified. The information requested from the utility company will be real time data, this is absolutely necessary. What the people in this town and our neighboring town has endured is intolerable, it cannot happen. At least we can make it known that the people out of our control need to do a better job. Also stated that Comcast is a disaster, still without internet and cable. Told that they would get to it eventually, something is wrong, they shouldn't go unscathed in this, but when people like National Grid and all your efforts and you get this type of response in unacceptable.

Resident informed the board that he thought the Reverse 911 was a scam as did many other residents.

Leonard Vilantry questioned if moving to another utility is a commitment the board can make at this time.

Chair stated that it was early to make this type of decision, need to explore the options and who would be the replacement.

Jen Benson informed the residents that what was discovered is that the problem in getting more crews operating was a problem with management. Called Chief Operations Manager three times a day and I came to the Governor and Lt. Governor and was informed that this was a private company. As such, we had to have their permission to get assistance as these lines are owned by them and it took a private conversation with Unitil and the Governor to get this information. What this company has done and the power that they have is a travesty, a real wake up call, something at this level has never happened before.

Chair recommends that complaints and historical data from evidence of limbs growing through lines, every thing that is being done now should be documented. Would like to join forces as a whole block of communities.

Recommendation made to send complaint forms to every resident of Lunenburg, too many people have too many pieces to pick up in their lives.

Jen explained that this is the reason why the state wants to have the hearings take place here, so that people don't have to travel into Boston.

Linda Vickery, 71 Arbor Street saw National Grid set up at the High School and they worked to help us, hugged them and grateful that she still has a house. It was incredible what these people have done; don't know how to thank them.

Bonnie Edes, there has to be some sort of investigation, it may be a private company but they service the public and you as selectmen shouldn't be shut out from receiving information. Need to know how the citizens can be part of the process, should not be at the whim of Unitil to decide that these people should get information. It's going to take the voice of all to get this out there.

Board will keep the public informed of when and how we will be addressing this, it will not go by the wayside, we will continue our probe and there may be times for your input and need a public record of the impact that this has had on our community.

Recessed @ 8:45 P.M. for 10 minutes, meeting resumed @ 8:53 P.M.

Board concerned over the fact that this meeting was neither televised nor recorded to be provided to the public at a later date. Tom M., will take this to the PACC committee.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

APPOINTMENTS

1. 7:15 P.M. Pledge of Liquor License – On the Rocks – tabled as applicant absent.

2. 7:30 P.M. Bonnie Edes Interview, Council on Aging Vacancy – Chair read the attached memo from the Council on Aging recommending the appointment of Bonnie Edes.

Bonnie informed the board that she has been a resident for about a year, married to a long time resident. Want to serve this community, mother suffered from alzheimer's and was very involved with this population and only hope to give back to that generation what they have given to me.

Board expressed appreciation for her involvement and would entertain a motion. Dave motioned to appoint Bonnie to the Council on Aging, Paula seconded, voted unanimously.

CURRENT BUSINESS

1. CAFO Updates – None

2. Minutes - hold

Warrants - #12M 09, 12/11/08 - \$7,038.00, #13 P 09, 12/22/08 - \$722,160.63, #32 A 09, 12/22/08 - \$888.00 and #33 09, 12/23/09 - \$470,368.57 reviewed and signed.

3. Action File Issues – none

4. License Renewals – Chair reviewed the attached list of license renewals. Dave placed hold on Brocap / Lakelodge and Lakeview Club, Paula hold on Sandra Moriarty, d/b/a as Showroom Sammy's.

Brocap, Dave questioned the septic system and why are we reissuing liquor license.

Per CAFO, these are two independent actions and they have requested a renewal. They cannot reopen until they are in compliance. Paula's concern is that we are issuing a license to a business that's out of compliance with health codes. We held another license because they were not in compliance with the fire codes.

CAFO believes this could be a condition of their license, they are not currently operating and we did have the police do random inspection. If we approve they still cannot operate until the corrective measures are in accordance with the Board of Health codes.

Lakeview Club has a payment in place and they are current with the payment plan, concern is that they are going to remain current.

Question if this can be done as an administrative action, to be revoked if they don't adhere to their payment plan.

Per CAFO state law allows them to enter into an agreement with the Treasurer.

Board concurred willing to grant, but make it clear to them that they are to stay current with the payment plan or they come before us and they pay it in full or the license is gone. Board will commence with revocation hearing. Letter to specify that the issuance is contingent upon honoring the existing payment plan.

Showroom Sammy's – Wong's Motor Corporation to be removed from list.

Steve motion to approve the licenses with conditions upon owing the past due balances, Paula seconded, approved unanimously.

5. Open Space Committee Goals & Objectives – tabled to next meeting.

OLD BUSINESS

1. Committee Updates - none

2. Whalom 40B, Lunenburg Estates - tabled

3. Alleva Easement – Paula will not sign the agreement as it does an injustice to this town and refuse to sign. CAFO this easement is required as part of the decision by the court and would be in place and effective regardless of whether signed or not.

Dave town accepted this and like it or not he doesn't believe we have any recourse.

Paula does not believe that the town did not know all the information and our counsel at the time did not present the facts and believe we are giving up people's rights.

CAFO's understanding is the ruling by the judge is that the Town grant this easement and don't believe the failure of this board to sign will have any bearing on this to exist.

Chair the judgment did not order us to sign this, our appeal failed and this is the judgment, do not want to sign it and will not. However, by not signing don't want to incur any further costs to the town.

CAFO, will speak with town counsel to see if there is some other mechanism to put this into effect without the Board of Selectmen approval. No action taken at this time.

APPOINTMENTS/REAPPOINTMENTS

1. Council on Aging – unanimously appointed Bonnie Edes of 67 Royal Fern Drive as a member of the Council on Aging.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

1. Contracts – no action

Being no further business board voted unanimously to adjourn Regular Session at 9:46 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura Williams, Chief Administrative Assistant
Board of Selectmen